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ABSTRACT

In selecting materials for English education (both preservice and inservice), it must be remembered that, although materials alone do not make the difference, selection of resources must be informed and careful. This paper presents guidelines for material selection in the areas of language acquisition, composition, methods for teaching the language arts, classroom materials, professional journals and references, and miscellaneous ideas for English teachers. Specific titles are suggested and discussed for most of these categories. (JM)

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MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH EDUCATION: SURVEYING THE TERRITORY

Carol Kuykendall

Let me begin with two quick disclaimers. First, I don't take my topic literally enough to spend the next twenty minutes as an animated bibliography. Second, the focus on available materials must not suggest that materials alone make much difference. It is what we do with them that counts, but that's another topic--or rather a whole spring conference of other topics.

Even so, materials do matter in English education, and those of us involved in either preservice or continuing work with teachers can be grateful that resources are abundant and diversified enough to justify a session of this sort. In fact, the territory is too vast to invite casual meandering. Even experienced explorers welcome a map, at least to define the boundaries and to mark major features of the terrain. One sharp demarkation of boundaries has been discussed during this conference--that is, the new Guidelines for the Preparation of English Teachers. This definition of essential knowledge, abilities, and attitudes serves as a working outline within which to identify useful resources. To suggest some of the most prominent features within these guidelines, we now have the Seventy-sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, which was previewed

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at the NCTE convention in Chicago last fall. This volume, titled simply The Teaching of English, contains eleven state-of-the-art papers by acknowledged leaders in key areas of English education. Though each serves a much broader purpose, these two very different documents can function to organize and to inform the selection of materials for English education.

Let me illustrate with one obvious convergence. In the new guidelines for preparation of English teachers, knowledge concerning language acquisition is first on the list. In the Seventy-sixth NSSE Yearbook, the first chapter offers a perspective on this same topic. Surely, the imperative is clear enough to send us searching for materials to help both prospective and practicing English teachers understand more about how children actually learn their language. I think immediately of James Britton's Language and Learning and Walter Loban's more recent Language Development, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve. I think also of the work of Basil Bernstein, which provides a stimulating introduction to the cultural and socio-economic dimensions of language learning. Whatever the preference in basic sources, the process of extending and updating such materials has been greatly simplified by the inclusion of topical research summaries in NCTE journals: Research Roundup in English Journal, Research Update in Language Arts, and the annual annotated bibliography in Research

in the Teaching of English. Furthermore, both the English Journal and Language Arts feature regular ERIC/RCS reports and reviews of professional publications.

As you will see, this reference to materials on language acquisition is intended as more than an example of how the new teacher preparation guidelines can focus the selection of materials for English education or how that process has been streamlined by research summaries and reviews in the professional journals. I chose the example deliberately to advance the bias which will undoubtedly slant this whole talk. By helping fledgling teachers gain insight into how language is learned, we lessen their vulnerability to some of the more dubious practices of how English is often taught out in the schools. Here, I'm invoking a more general point made by Geraldine LaRoque in a recent English Education article, that of trying to immunize student teachers against the disease of "it-must-be-OK-because-everyone-else-is-doing-it." Particularly virulent strains of this disease are often contracted in teachers' lounges presided over by countless Miss Friddiches all across the land. While materials cannot insure lifelong immunity to complacency, conformity, and rigidity, they can help.

Let me try another illustration. Collectively, we've learned a great deal during the last ten or fifteen years about what actually happens when a person sits down to write and thus about how composition might be better taught. Too little of this new insight is reflected in too many public school classrooms. The new guidelines for teacher preparation list knowledge of the composing process as an essential qualification for English teachers. Here, we can draw from some rather solid descriptive studies -- Donald Graves's An Examination of the Writing Processes of Seven-Year-Old Children, Janet Emig's The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, and the new study by James Brittain and others The Development of Writing Ability (Ages 11-18). The May 1975 issue of College Composition and Communication featured a major bibliography on writing, and all the other NCTE journals mentioned earlier carry periodic research summaries and ERIC reports on composition. Another source worth considering is Sara Lundsteen's Help for the Teacher of Written Composition, K-9, which summarizes research in the acquisition of oral and written language, then uses this summary as a platform upon which to suggest teaching techniques. Materials are just as abundant -- and their application just as desperately needed -- in the key area of how reading is learned and thus taught.

Though we do not yet have all or even most of the answers about how children learn to speak, write, and read, the answers we do have undergird many current methods textbooks. Such method books, based on a coherent philosophy of learning and teaching, give a beleaguered rookie something to hang onto when confronted by Miss Friddich in that lounge. Though there are many such texts, let me illustrate with three of the most obvious which I try to smuggle into every English department in Houston: James Moffett's A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum K-13, Alan Purves's How Porcupines Make Love: Notes on a Response-Centered Curriculum, and Stephen Judy's Explorations in the Teaching of Secondary English: A Source Book for Experimental Teaching. The market abounds with methods texts offering more comprehensive but less pointed approaches. Current examples include Decisions about the Teaching of English by John Simmons, Robert Shafer, and Gail West and The Dynamics of English Instruction by George Hillocks, Bernard McCabe, and James Campbell. Certainly there are enough solid methods books to offer booster shots to the practicing professional as well as partial innoculation to the preservice trainee.

May I suggest a less likely source of preservice materials -- that is, real-world classroom materials published for public school consumption? I am

haunted by a statement James Squire made to an NCTE study group in Chicago, a statement citing research to indicate that more than 60% of all classroom activities in the schools are structured by the textbook and another 35% by other commercially available media. This overwhelming influence of packaged materials is a rather embarrassing fact of life to those of us who work with teachers. It is a fact that needs to be reckoned with on many fronts, but one of the most immediate possibilities is to initiate preservice teachers into the world of packaged materials early and thoroughly. Have them examine widely used textbooks and nonprint ancillary materials, even -- God forbid! -- workbooks and standardized tests. Have them examine these materials as they work through professional materials in language acquisition, the structural and cultural workings of English, the composing and reading processes, curriculum design, way of responding to student discourse and helping students respond to literature, visual literacy, the uses of assessment, and all other facets of English education. By developing the habit of measuring commercial classroom materials for students against the yardsticks of theory and research, prospective teachers can become more adept at evaluating those materials and preparing to influence textbook choices in the schools where they will later work. In the area of literature, examining such materials as semi-individualized kits of paperbacks

also provides a sampling of selections appropriate for students of various interests and levels of development. Units published by NCTE such as Teaching the Decades and Thematic Units in the Teaching of English and the Humanities fit into this category. The best of such units show how matierals can be organized for classroom use and how really creative teaching can be. But prospective teachers need to see the worst as well as the best; here, I'm too cowardly to give examples of either type, but you--and I hope they--will know the difference. The point is to develop discrimination. The corresponding point in working with experienced teachers is a bit different. Here, innovative classroom materials can be used to teach you-know-who new tricks. Even in this day of retrenchment in publishing, there are some superb new materials with which to set brushfires of excitement and change. Such judicious use of pre-packaged teaching materials seems to me one very practical way of building bridges between preservice and inservice education and at the same time upgrading what happens during that 95% of classroom time that seems to be in the hands of publishers rather than teachers.

Certainly, I should underscore another whole category of materials that can make a modest but lasting difference in the quality of teaching--that is, materials that give teachers the tools for continued learning, materials that support that lifelong commitment to professional growth included as an essential

attitude in the guidelines for teacher preparation. Perhaps the most obvious resources in this category are the professional journals published by the various sections of NCTE. The teacher who develops an early addiction to the journals has an automatic link to the multiple resources of the National Council, including the NCTE Catalogue of Publications for English and the Language Arts -- an annual listing as useful to those of us who work with teachers as to teachers themselves. The journals analyze and debate current professional issues and thus help keep readers from becoming myopic or static. The English Journal especially has begun to teach all of us our political ABC's, to suggest sensible responses to our critics, and to recommend ways of wresting the steeringwheel of the accountability movement from the politicians. As mentioned earlier, each journal encapsulates research and reviews new materials designed for both teachers and students. Certainly it should not be difficult to get young teachers hooked on Language Arts and English Journal or such non-NCTE offerings as Media and Method and the Arizona English Bulletin. But dare we hope that prospective teachers will also develop an early appetite for Research in the Teaching of English? Should we not make use of the ERIC system a staple activity in teacher preparation courses? Maybe still another way to make English education more open-ended is to inject materials focusing on the future. Shouldn't exposure to

Edmund Farrell's Deciding the Future make a novice more serious about seeking ways to remain dynamic and responsive as the teaching of English undergoes the inevitable changes that propel us toward the year 2000? Not only are materials available to nourish such ongoing professional growth the ERIC system and our professional journals have made these materials more easily accessible than ever before. The question is, can we make learning to learn central in English education?

Perhaps so. It's certainly worth a try. But the profession will still have a place for the rich miscellany of here-and-now cookbook-style materials that teachers on all experience levels seem to crave. As a closet recipe-clipper-and-filer, I can neither disdain this category of materials nor exclude it from the range of materials available for English education. Ideas for Teaching English, Grades 7-8-9, edited by my friend Ruth Reeves, still tops the bestseller list of NCTE. We all go to the convention exhibit area each Thanksgiving for our yearly Classroom Practices freebie. We have discovered that Teachers and Writers Collaborative offers the Whole Word Catalog, a very popular item as is Gary Gerbrandt's An Idea Book for Acting Out and Writing Language K-8. Few makers of daily lesson plans can resist the 350+-page English Teacher's Activities Handbook, An Ideabook for Middle and Secondary

Schools by Floyd Bergman. Let's help put practicing and prospective teachers in touch with as many of these activity factories as possible and encourage them to borrowers be. Idea books -- especially those stressing interactive, student-centered approaches -- can make theory come alive and multiply the teacher's own expanding repertoire of strategies.

This very subjective survey of materials -- really, broad types of materials -- to support our efforts in English education has not even touched on nonprint resources such as the burgeoning cassette library of NCTE or the fine films built into some of the Far West Lab minicourses. Neither has it touched upon resources for assessment and guidance -- for example, the very useful Illinois Tests in the Teaching of English.But in this day of modish extremes typified by narrowly conceived PBTE in the universities and back-to-the-basics psuedo-accountability in the schools, it seems more important to sketch the picture in broad terms and to plead for balance, substance, and open-endedness in English education, both preservice and inservice. Although we do not have all the materials needed to insure these directions, the main problem is one of informed selectivity among those we do have. The major goal of materials is the overall goal cited years ago in Freedom and Discipline -- to send into every classroom a teacher with "the mind of an experienced professional and the heart of a devoted amateur."